

CASKET

DRAWER 15

BURIAL

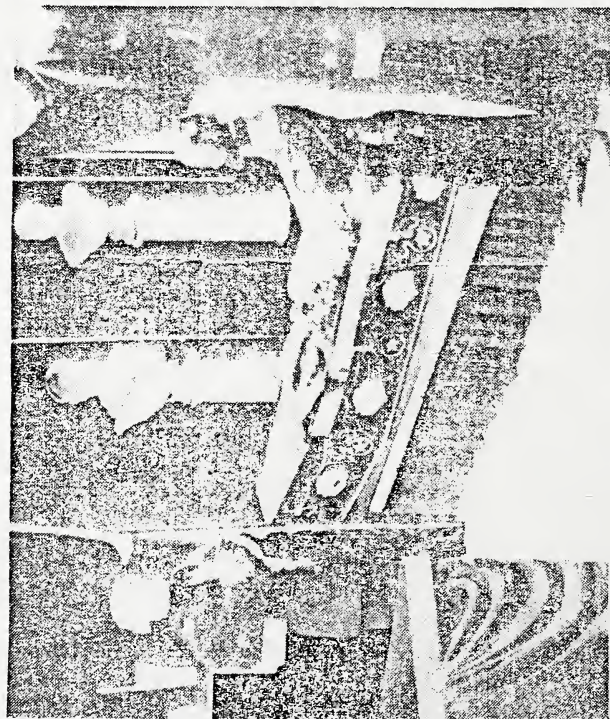
11-2009 WPT 0112

The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln's Casket

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



Only photo of Lincoln's casket was taken in New York by Jeremiah Gurney Jr.

Lone Photograph Taken of Casket

The photograph accompanying the story of Abraham Lincoln's strange dream is a copy of the only one taken of the Great Emancipator after his death.

When the train bearing Lincoln's body stopped in New York enroute to Springfield, the casket was removed to the city hall where thousands of persons paid their final respects. A young photographer, Jeremiah Gurney Jr., was granted permission to photograph the casket.

When Secretary of War Edwin Stanton heard of the photo being taken, he wired

to Adjutant General E. D. Townsend (shown at foot of casket opposite Admiral Charles Davis) and ordered the plate and any copies made from it seized and destroyed.

On April 29, 1865, Stanton was advised that the plate and copies had been destroyed except for one print which was enclosed with the letter. The one print was retained by Stanton and later turned up in the Illinois State Historical Library. It was included among the papers of John C. Nicolay, Lincoln's private secretary, to whom Stanton's son had sent it after Stanton's death.

Here, I'm sending this copy for your files.

19 May 1970

This carbon-copy reads more
easily if you hold it up to
a light.

3315 Wisconsin Ave
Washington DC

Lincoln Cabinet

Mr. Cashman, Curator
and Superintendent, Abraham
Lincoln Tomb
Springfield Illinois

Dear Mr. Cashman: Apologizing for not knowing
your first name.

Recently I was privileged to make a snapshot
photo of Mr. Troy Lissimore, Historian,
at Ford's Theatre in Washington DC as
he held up a deep (Kodak) picture frame
containing several items pertaining to
the solder-sealing of Lincoln's Coffin on
4 May 1865.

It was a bright-sunshiny day. Mr. Lissimore
went to the back door of Ford's Theatre
where he
~~was~~ permitted me to photograph him standing there
holding the deep picture frame and its contents.

19 May
1970

Continued To: Logos Legion Member, Mr. Cashman

The three notes - in a vertical row - on left side of the pic frame are referred to in the enclosed (typed) note. adjacent-to-and-above the top-left note is a blue card. The Card (from top to bottom) on left is an open blade pocket knife. (See note #2)

Bottom Card is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of ~~gold~~ and adjacent thereto on left and below is note #3

There are 2 soldering irons see ref to note #4. In the top-Card is a completely faded Card do U's photo of President Lincoln. below and adjacent-to that faded photo is a newspaper clipping telling of the capture of Jefferson Davis.

You may wish my compliments - keep the enclosed photo. I have a negative, close-up of the box and contents. I may make a print of it and send the print to you.

3

19
May
1970

Continued TO Mr. Cashman; Superintendent
and Curator Lincoln's Tomb;

My question, Mr. Cashman is --

Do you have much information on the act
of sealing President Lincoln's Coffin any: --
Photos, diaries, scrap books, letters E. Allen?
How about the Springfield newspaper 4-5
May 1865? any good story date there?

When the grave robber did come late, - was
the actual Coffin in a Great Lead-Pot
that was sealed. Did the grave robbers
actually handle such a heavy-heavy
object - (it was how weighed around 1 ton)
or did they cut the lead over as 1st
and remove the Coffin. I believe they
were frightened off before they actually
accomplished that; - right??

19 May
1970

4

Mr. Cashman, Curator - Superintendent Lincoln Tower,
I shall be tremendously appreciative of Your
Comments, Your response to my inquiry.
Thank You very much indeed.

If You want a - m - color blow-up of the (Box 146)
picture frames and contents please advise me
to send You one with my Compliments - etc?

Respectfully Most Gratefully, Indeed

Red Sullivan

Thank You very-very much.

21 May
1970

Tools used to
Real Lincoln
Casket

Page
One

Dear Doctor McMurtry:

This note is - (I suppose) - the last and final chapter of
the 'Mystery of the Missing Embalming Instrument'.

In one of my most recent letters I sent you 2 small
in color snapshot photos of what very probably
may likely be the end of the trail. One was of
a Colored Gentleman with a Lissimont, Hissomix
holding a 'Box-Like' picture frame (merely a deep
frame) in which are 2 soldering irons,
half a bar of solder, a pocket knife, a small
blue card (printed) a Cartes de vis photo of Lincoln
hopelessly, completely faded and a brief news
paper item on the Capture of Jeff Davis. AND
there are 4 notes - handwritten in ink on white
paper each approx the latitude and the

Longitude of a pack of cigarettes. The notes
top left - "The Guard that passed me through the
guards May 4 1865. S. S. Elder" on left side, half
way - Top - Bottom; "The knife that scraped the coffin
of A. Lincoln May 4 1865. S. S. Elder"

18 May = Toi, Doctor McMurtry -- 1970

Bottom left "This is a piece of the solder left after soldering the coffin of A. Lincoln ~~May 4 1865~~"
By S. S. Elder May 4 1865"

note at the
at Bottom-right, beneath 2 soldering irons "The
soldering iron used in solder the coffin
of A Lincoln May 4 1865 By S S Elder"
He has the word "By" before his signature in the
(2) Bottom-left; and, Bottom-right note, not in the
2 left-top ^{LEFT} Center.

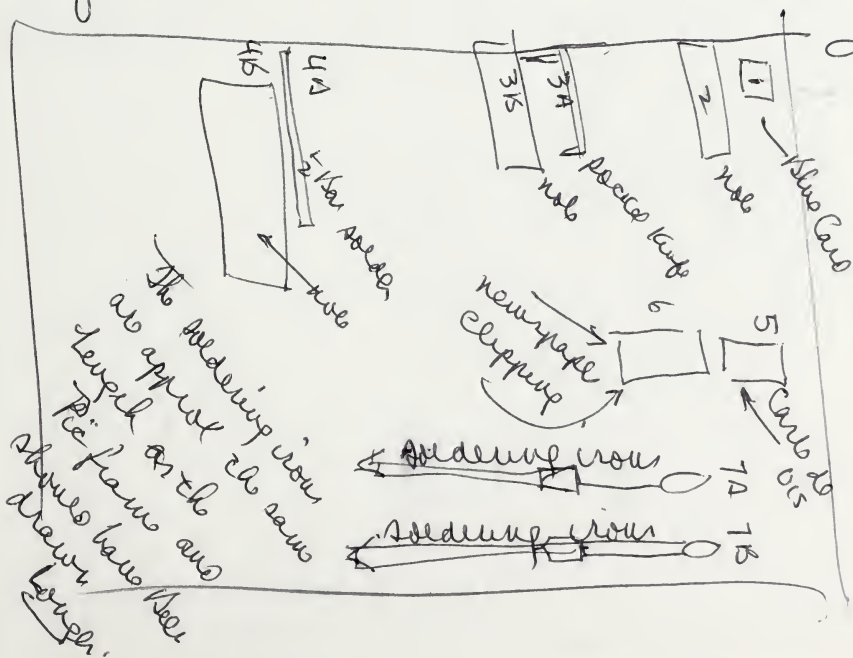
The Blue Card, Printed "STATED"
Guards will respect
This state officers pass.
Sharon TYNDALE
Secretary of State
Olin W. Milner Auditor
(EdinH)
Revenue Treasurer"

The ("box like") picture-frame is not ~~on~~ on display
at Ford's Theater.

3

18 May! - Continued to; Doctor m-Huntly -- 1970

I am reasonably certain, I believe I sent you
a small in-color snapshot photo of T20 &
Lissimore holding the (Box-Luc) picture frame.
But, I believe you may have overlooked
acknowledging them. I also recently sent
4 different excerpted Encyclopedia articles on
Lincoln, taken from different Encyclopedias. I'm
sure you'd probably like to acknowledge receipt
of them too - OK?



Here is a crude drawing illustrating what the contents of the box-luc picture frame looks like

Continued;

18 May 1970 -- Doctor R G Mc Murtry

I don't quite understand how anybody could have difficulty finding Soldier's Home, - it's 500 acres; from downtown go north on Geo Ave for Soldier's home; turn right off Georgia Avenue and go East on Upshur to 2nd + Upshur, Enter at Eagle Gate, Anderson Cottage is a very short distance inside the Gate. Ozi (← here)

go East on NY Avenue to North Capitol turn left and go north on North Capitol and one meets the southern tip of Soldier's Home at Michigan Ave + North Capitol.

Bus ↓ Its Best then to turn left on Michigan (west) and follow the perimeter of Soldier's Home Grounds to Eagle Gate. Ozi

(Get on any 7th St. Northbound Bus, Marked "Soldier's Home". The Geo Ave to Upshur is simpler Easier to follow in an automobile

18 May 1970 Continued; Doctor R F Mc Murtry

As far as Lincoln being "stage struck" couldn't that be said about Billy Sunday, The Roosevelt Wm J Bryan - couldn't it be said about any politician who is a talented speaker, who loves his vocation, is stimulated by the applause of the multitude. Isn't there an honest, natural kinship between the talent, the character of the role, the type of activity they both the actor and the politician, especially the forceful eloquent politician who is a talented, eloquent forceful speaker. Yet on the other hand who we thought of a distinguished actor as being a meek + humble person. Yet Lincoln was, when you think of actors and it is impossible in your mental image of an actor to think of him as meek and humble, try it, call to mind any famous actor, now try to think of that person as being meek or humble. Lincoln was, he most certainly, definitely was; he was indeed.

18 May 1970 Continued: Mr Robt Gerald McMurry; DIRECTOR

Recently at NY Ave Church one of our Lincoln Group members gave the church a Lincoln window. The clergyman at NY Ave Presbyterian is reported to have commented not with a mean allusion but casually merely as one commenting on any public figure - the Pater said 'Lincoln was Conceited' who isn't, who doesn't have enough self respect. Enough Pater it's a natural attribute, after that comment I went thru a good portion of Lincoln day by day and pulled a mean wild & red-line back point at places where I thought Lincoln was double, place covering, kind when and where a lesser person would have been outraged and furious. The common expression is 'burns up' & 'blew my stack' for never hears of Lincoln making a show of petty-Pater temper-outburst. Oh-I know, sure when several times he was annoyed one he bodily removed a block ('bloody block') from his face, that's not to be wondered at what is to be wondered at AT, is that he didn't do it ^{more} often and ^{more} regularly,

7

18 May
1970

Continued: Doctor G. R. McWhitney

Herald; I have all index but I can't seem to put my hands on it, it is probably placed away in some of my large brown-paper envelopes but I can't seem to find it. All all your many-many articles such as mimeographed copies of speeches, pamphlets and Magazine articles are they indexed, including of course Lincoln Herald and L.L. 7 what I want is the title date, author etc etc or some NC + American Indians and QC + Navy. I am familiar with the Chas Oscar Paulsen "~~Mag of Hist~~" American Hist review Vol XIV #2 or is the Collect of 'Magazine of History' Vol 40 number one. Anyway; the Paulsen article is the only one of which I have any knowledge. How about Indians? 7

Recently, I visited Washingtoniana Div DC Public Library; and the 2 women said "Oh we've been waiting for you to come in" and they handed me a letter from Doctor John Lucus Acting Director Boston U. Librarian 771 Commonwealth Ave Boston 02215, asking about: - "Do you also have any letters to or from Townsend Brintlett" 7 I have not been able to find much on Brintlett. P. 85 in Monaghan's U2

18 May 1970 Continued; Doctor McMurry

(in Monaghan 42) "Bibliography" are a couple of
 refs to Bartlett; that - plus the Enclosure
 which I want sent back to me - However - You
 Probably may wish to keep it because of
 Doctor Lancus' search for Bartlett material.
 Do You have very much on Bartlett?

Please let me have You better mentioning
 receipt of ch; Excerpted Lincoln articles
 - taken from various Encyclopedias; -- The
 several color-photos of the soldering tools
 used on Lincoln's coffin 4 May 65 - OK?

Best wishes indeed for Your Good Health
 Your families Good Health and may
 You all live long and be happy.

as ever; Bert Sheldon

never; I shall be very - genuinely and enormously grateful
 for You keep on; what Your LNC F index shows
 re "NAVY + NC" "Indian and AL" OK?

Bert



1-6-70

Doctor M. Murtry + Gentlemen, FRIENDS

How the Care of the mysteriously missing Embalming Instrument
 got started was: it was at a L.G. meeting last fall when Josephine
 Coto told that she and Josephine Allen visited a US Govt warehouse
 in Va, & Mrs Allen held up the Embalming instrument that was
 to Embalm President Lincoln, (and ^{she} is alleged to have said) ^{used}

that it was dirty and she was going to throw it away. Then
 I wrote Mrs Coto asking for more information about
 the "Embalming instrument". 3 weeks later her (Mrs Coto's)
 reply came saying if she said that it was "the instrument
 used to Embalm Lincoln, she must have been mistaken, also
 they did have some soldering irons used to fasten &
 bolt onto Lincoln coffin" It took me weeks and weeks
 to finally reach Lissimore the man at Two-chale who

is Custodian of the Soldering Irons, I visited Ford
 theatre, took small snapshot in-color photos of the
 hot-lux Pic frame. Then I wrote Geo Cashman Curator

of Lincoln town and Lo-ans-Rehob & Cashman
 says the whole "shebang" is a phony = Boy!! (I send
 Xerox Copy of Cashman's letter) now I have to do some

research digging must local - if that's possible.
 the inventory of what Oldroyd has, and send and
turned over to the Government. I also need to see

Springfield Ill 1865 City directory and a US Census 1860-
 -1870- for "SS Eiler" in Springfield, = He's the coffin maker
 as ever but

There is still a rotten spot in the apple. Joe told you in my
 next letter the inconsistency of the Coto-Allen story; and
 the big outcome.

Lincoln's Casket

George F. Cashman
President, Tomb
Springfield, Illinois 62702

Refutes other Claims

P. M. H.

Phone 221-2141

Phone 221-2141

May 25, 1960

Mr. Bert Sheldon
3345 Wisconsin Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Sheldon:

Your letter of May 19 I have found to be most interesting. I am not sure that what information I can give you will be of much value.

Records of the events in Springfield for May 3-4, 1865 are very sketchy. The newspapers and other extant records deal mostly with the preparations for the reception in Springfield of the body. This, with a rather detailed account of the activities taking place at the State House during the period in which Mr. Lincoln's remains were on public view, seems to be all that is recorded.

It always pains me to have to dispute statements that have been made and that people have nurtured over the years, but I know that you want the truth. The statements contained on the cards displayed in the frame which are shown in the picture you have sent, are entirely erroneous. S.S. Elder appears to be something of a shadowy figure since he is not known by any records in Springfield. It would not be possible to have opened a lead lining or covering of the casket since there was no lead lining or other covering used in the casket in which the body arrived in Springfield. So if the items shown, lead bar and soldering irons, we used at all the date of May 4, 1865 is wrong.

On May 4, 1865, the body within the original casket, was placed in the public vault in Oak Ridge Cemetery. On December 21, the same year, the body was removed to a temporary vault, constructed for that purpose. On September 19, 1871, the body was taken from the original casket and placed in a metallic (iron) casket. When the time approached for the dedication of the Tomb it was found that the metallic casket would not fit into the marble sarcophagus which had been prepared to receive it. The body was then placed in a lead lined red cedar coffin, on October 9, 1874, and the lead lining was sealed by soldering by Col. A.J. Babcock.

I am enclosing a little booklet written by my wife which will give you more information concerning the history of the Tomb.

It is my thought that the items to which you refer were a part of the Osborn Oldroyd collection which the government purchased in 1925. It is probable that a copy of the inventory of this collection might be found in the archives of the Library of Congress, and hopefully with a description of the history of each item.

Perhaps I have not answered your questions to your entire satisfaction, and if so, please feel free to write again.

Sincerely

Geo. L. Cashman



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS - CENTRAL

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1100 OHIO DRIVE, S. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242

13615-1 (11/7/67)

January 10, 1968

Mr. S. B. Flier
1100 Ohio Drive, S. W.
Washington, D. C. 20242

Dear Mr. Flier:

This is in response to your recent request for information concerning the coffin of Abraham Lincoln, a Mr. S. B. Flier, and the Oldryd inventory of Louisiana.

The question of whether Mr. Lincoln's coffin was made of lead or only leadlined is still being debated by historians and Lincoln biographers; most secondary sources differ in their assumption of the coffin's construction materials. Primary sources are equally baffling. Brief excerpts from several of our reference sources will give you an idea of what we mean.

In her recent book, Twelve Days, Dorothy M. Kunhardt writes that "Inside the walnut case was an extra heavy lining of lead."

In the February 15, 1963 issue of Life, she stated: "... Two plumbers, Leon P. Hopkins and his nephew Charles L. Wiley were sent for to chisel an oblong piece out of the top of the leadlined coffin just over Lincoln's head and shoulders. The same men had opened the casket 14 years before. . . . Resoldering the cut-out piece was the work of a few moments. . . ."

On pages 305 and 306 of Lloyd Lewis' book, Myths After Lincoln, appear statements regarding Lincoln's coffin: "... six of Lincoln's old friends wanted to see that the body was safe, and a plumber's assistant, Leon P. Hopkins, made an opening in the lead box. . . ." (p. 305)

"... It had been seen that the mahogany casket in which he had been brought from Washington was breaking up, and the committee substituted for it an iron coffin, a curiously ill-fated iron coffin, into which the inner coffin of lead was transferred." (p. 306)

" The iron coffin was and a new outer coffin---a red cedar box---was and a worker lined this with lead to satisfy themselves that Lincoln was really dead."

On page 324 Lewis states further that ". . . . Lincoln's body was laid in a coffin and his body, being which in the face of the lead coffin."

After the last man had identified the corpse, Leon E. Hopkins, the plumber's assistant, soldered the lead square fast over the face, " (New paragraph, same page as above)

" Once more Leon E. Hopkins, the plumber, who had for fourteen years been calling himself the last man to see Lincoln's face, opened the casket, this time unsoldering his own soldering. . . . " The date for this opening of the casket would have been September 21, 1901; the preceding opening took place in April, 1867. (p. 361)

On page 363 of the fourth volume of his four volume biography of Lincoln, Carl Sandburg indicates that the coffin was "lined with lead, covered with black broadcloth. . . ."

As most of the references in the Lincoln Museum collection are secondary, with respect to Lincoln's coffin, we offer the suggestion that you contact the Chicago Historical Society for primary information. The same applies to information concerning the character S. S. Elder.

All of the Oldroyd correspondence relating to the collection of items he sold to the government in 1926 has never been found; nor is there a complete Oldroyd inventory. Therefore, the Lincoln Museum collection contains several items without corresponding documents or histories; for example, the items which were presented for your examination at Ford's Theatre.

We hope we have been helpful and that your interest in the Lincoln Story will continue. Herewith your letter from Mr. Cashman is returned.

Sincerely yours,

Gene Daugherty
Gene Daugherty
Chief, Urban and Environmental
Activities

Enclosure

Springfield 24 Feb 4 1869.

Mr H. E. Barker Dr Sir

In Reply to your request for an Account of my experience in sealing the casket containing the body of Abraham Lincoln I make the following statement—

At nine o'clock on the Morning of May 3^d 1865 the funeral carriages of Abraham Lincoln after a twelve days journey from Washington City Arrived in Springfield Mo. A vast multitude had gathered in the city to receive and view the remains of our beloved fellow countryman and so vast and so numerous that only the Presence of

Ps You are requested to Guarantee Patience a credit in
don't forget - ok?

319-71

Dear Doctor Mc Murtry!

I'm tremendously pleased indeed that You are so much
better - and for Heavens sake let's hope You remain
So!

I have You now about the letter from SS Eder, about
his having soldered Lincoln's coffin shut. I
phoned Don "Bellisepi" (?) "Giles" (?). Don said
"Sure quite all right" - (He phoned some chief ^{deacon} ~~clerk~~
muckety-muck guy in Nat Park Service Hqts
and then called me back (a couple of hours
later. I was home, it's been raining all day (long)
So! "Yes" You do have a fine Carter launch ok
to use the Eder letter in L.L.: But! Hold Your
Horses a moment!

Can You wait till I get a letter back from Dr Wayne
Temple. On 12/10/53 I put George Cashman and
Wayne Temple into a taxi cab and took them
to Ford's estate, the Historian was then
waiting for us - By app (I saw to that) They
gave a careful and unbiassed observation -
- Examination of the 2 Soldering irons and the

Small (Casting) Copy
Type transcripts (Copies)

Springfield 24 Feb 6 1899.

Mr W. E. Barker Dr Sir

In Reply to your request for an Account of my experience in sealing the casket containing the body of Abraham Lincoln I make the following statement -

At nine o'clock on the Morning of May 3 1865 the funeral casket of Abraham Lincoln after a twelve days journey from Washington City Arrived in Springfield Mo. A vast multitude had gathered in the Court House to receive and view the remains of our beloved fellow countryman. The vast numbers of people present only the presence of the military prevented them from coming any nearer. In their efforts to catch a glimpse of Lincolns face from the time the coffin was opened at 10 o'clock on the Morning of May the 3rd throughout the day and even through the long hours of Night this great crowd slowly passed its way into the State House through the North entrance up an flight of stairs through the Hall and down another stairway passing out through the South door Shortly after nine o'clock on the Morning of May 4 I was summoned

By Mr H. G. Fitzhugh and Cal
J of Hancock to Repair at once
with the necessary tools. I was then
engaged with my Brother in the
Stone and Tin Business, to the
State House over to seal up air
tight with Salder the Lead Lin
Basket containing Nitre
Boly they started to leave the store
As I collected my tools and I hastily
told them back disclaiming that -
It would be impasable to pass
through the crowd with out a guard
and Hancock said he would provide
a guard and soon four Saldiers
with Bayonets fixed appeared to
escort me they were obliged to use
their Bayonets - More than once in
Haremng one way through I
carried in one hand my charcoal
Fire Pot and in the other a small
Bottle of musc Acid and a State
Officers Pass to admit me through
The line of guards stationed at -
The Gate as we passed through the
Iron Gate into the State House Ground
The crowd surged up against me
So that acid from the Bottle splashed
on the blue card board Pass nearly
obliterating the words Printed on it -
We passed on into the building
As to Representatives

1 Where the body lay in state
2 Quickly Proceeding with the work
3 I was soon able to announce the
4 completion to the officers in charge.

20 Thiding for ever his face from out
21 With the aid of the same Solder grounds I
22 Returned to my place of business Taking
23 With me the Tools that had been used
24 In Securing the work so sacred to me
25 That I have never used them since but
26 Carefully guarded them and cherished them
27 As precious mementos of the saddest
28 Memento in American history the
29 The Memento when so far as this world
30 is concerned the face of Abraham
31 Lincoln was covered to be seen
32 No more Mrs. Smith. Ralph W. Silver

WAR DEPARTMENT.

OFFICE OF THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL OF THE ARMY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300.

An account of S.S. Elden,
making the coffin of
Pres. Grant Lincoln
May 3-1865, at
Springfield, Illinois.

PS You are requested to Swim at Park View & create a line
don't forget - ok?

3-19-71

Dear Doctor Mc Murtry:

I'm tremendously pleased indeed that You are so-much
better - and for Heavens Sake let's hope You remain
So.

I have you now about the letter from SS Zed, about
his having soldered Lincoln's coffin shut. I
phoned Don "Bellisepi" (?) "Bilesepi" (?). Don said
Sure quite all right - (He phoned some chief ^{deacon} ~~deacon~~
muckety-muck guy in Nat Park Service Hqts
and then called me back (a couple of hours
later. I was home, it's been raining all day (loop)
So, "Yes" You do have a free 'Carter Blanche' ok
to use the Zed letter in L.L.: But! Hold Your
Horses a moment!

Can you wait til I get a letter back from Dr Wayne
Temple. On 12th Nov I put George Cashman and
Wayne Temple into a taxi cab and took them
to Ford's estate, the Historian was then
waiting for us - By app (I saw to that) They
gave a careful and unhurried observation -
- Examination of the 2 Soldering irons and the

Smiley (Casting Cab)
Sgt transcripts (Caption)

3-19-71 Continued, to: Doctor Mc Murtry

II

Several months ago Cashman was emphatic in his doubt ~~that~~ of the story of the soldering iron and made his very substantial doubt quite clear in a letter he wrote to me. BUT!

(A) It is not the Scholar that Wayne Temple is; and

(B) Neither of them has seen the SS Eder letter Prior to that day (2-12-71)

Lissimore and Temple Promised to Exchange ^{letters} Pursuant to the authenticity of the SS Eder story. ~~and~~ Temple Promised to -- "When he got back to Springfield he'd look Eder up in the various records ('he'd check him out') But, when I called on Lissimore (855am) Wednesday - St. Patrick's day they neither of them had written (to each other) Pursuant to the Eder matter. SO!

Can you wait till I write to Temple and get his ~~a~~ reply back. I firmly believe he may likely give the Eder story a clean bill of health. ^{person}

19 March 1971 To Doclen McMurtry

Also: I looked for my negatives of some snapshot-photos I took of the Soldiering Irons. I can't find them. I may have sent them to you and said "Keep them" I hope so as I don't seem to have them here.

When I took the photos of the Soldiering Irons the (Calling Card - signs) Captions were clear

and readable. They had been kept covered air-tight with plastic. When Temple Cashman and I saw them (2-12-71) the Captions were fading badly and had a rusty-dusty look about them (as well - that's no way to

take care of Government Historical items) Do you have all the ^{SOLDIERING IRONS} photos you need, Or:-

Shall I go back and make some more snap shot ~~Snapshot~~ photos??

Can you wait till I visit Temple and see his

Reply?

as Ben; Bert

} How many Grandchildren do you have?

Copy to John Warner Esquire

20 March 1971

3315 Wisconsin Ave
Washington DC
20016

Dear Doctor Wayne Tempel: sir

On Lincoln's Birthday (1971) at Ford's Theatre
we were looking at some soldering
irons that were said to have been used to
seal Lincoln's coffin shut.

I read your comment that when you
returned to Springfield you were going to
look up SS Elder to verify, if possible
his story of having sealed Lincoln's
Coffin.

I am wondering if you have had time
to "check this thing out" and to
determine that his story really does
- or does not - seem true.
May I ask, what have you found out?

Respectfully Sincerely

Best Sheldon

Copy to LHLF atten R J MC + WJ H. This letter is incomplete and
an additional page will follow (when Temple returns my letter)

Dear Ed Thurson; I can hardly Sunday 3-21-71
imagine any neglect or absent minded oversight by me which resulted in my not
keeping you posted on the "Case" of the alleged
used to Tubalain Lincoln. I had said earlier I left
you out of the picture. We were at a Lincoln Group
Tucker Mahop Car fair when Josephine Cobb was
in (in front of 8 other persons at table sitting on)
about her having been with Josephine Cobb and
Josephine Cobb in a Government warehouse in Va.
and they (Allen-Abbott) showed her a not to keep
wooden box and they (M.A.) remarked that it
contained the tool (a device) used to Tubalain
Lincoln. But when I wrote Josephine Cobb ^{skinner}
for more details and at the same time I
wrote a Mr Geo Odier at US Interior
US Tax Service Historical Div - ^{MISS} Cobb ~~was~~
+ he did not answer for several weeks
(Odier did not reply.) Miss Cobb by this time
was attempting to jump on her first day.
In the letter she said that she was mistaken
that what the NPS people really have was
some "soldering iron".

P11

So: Japan wrote us Sep 7. In memo NPS

But addressed the Top Top Chief-deacon and he
wrote back for us to Communicate with
Linnos at Ford's Theater. I phoned him there

about 50-60 times over a period of several ^{months}

Each time asked for Mr. Linnos and Lfomy
name and phone number. In one case told

him to if possible avoid making contact
with me. So one morning I got up 7 am

went to Ford's Theater - waited till Linnos

Came on duty 7 am. once I caught up with

him it was friendly and he showed me

2 Soldering irons that were said to have
been used by SS Elders to seal Lincoln

Coffin. I had my camera along and

took a pic of Linnos and the Soldering
irons. But I promptly went to George

^{CASHMAN}
Cashman His Ch. Custodian (now) of Lincoln

Tomb - He's a retired welder & Business

man who likes what he's doing; and wants

to do it His living goes as in the Cemetery. ^{it is}
supposed to be Somewhat OF AN EXACT OF Linnos.

3-21-1971 Estlin

III

Cashman was seen and in an emphatically-
-stated letter declared the story of SS Elder and
the soldering iron to be a "Complete fake."

I have lost my feeling of affection and respect for
the matter of Elder and the soldering iron on
Mr. Lincoln's Coffin. I have fixed the book
on Mike Elder and his soldering iron.

However, 2 things happened. When Yea had no
time the Hutton-Saker 363 B picture in the book
she (much to my surprise) she NO NO, brought up
the story of the soldering iron and she told

it a new & differently this time. She said
the last time) that both elder and alder
were there (She did not mention
Alber Puer (with)). At the same hour. And she

has not previously mentioned a wooden
box and a "Caption" (a "narrative") written
on some paper, which identified the "instrument" as having
been used by Elder
P. L.

3-19-71 To Sharon

If I am guilty of losing You from the SS Elder-
-Cashman story There's only one explanation, and that
is Cashman's condemnation of the authenticity of
the Soldering-iron story discouraged me from any
further pursuit of the "Case". However two recent
developments: one was Joe Gots' "Refresher" review
and renewal of her story. That really surprised
me.

When Cashman and Doctor Wayne Temple were here
for Lincoln Birthday Ceremony Cashman-Temple
and I (we are 3) called on Lissimer and
Don't Dispel at Ford's Theatre and we gave a Good
Loop hard look at SS Elder's Caption, the
Soldering iron, a piece of solder, and a tail
to the per of Lincoln faded beyond recognition
and a newspaper clipping and a Soldering
iron in a shadow-box frame (no year on
it) I was rather pleased - I was thinking of
You, but still being cautious. I don't want to
Send You any Monkey-Business-Milwaukee stuff. Ever
NOT IF I CAN HELP IT.

3-21-71

Σδ bluron.

5

I hesitated to be too eager & impatient with
 Soet Temple, it is an important man in
 his field i.e. 'State Archivist' State of Illinois. - So
 I waited approx 30 days (plus a few days) and one
 morning again arriving as Lissmer arrived
 at work I am and Lissmer claimed he has
 order not to take me to the warehouse. I
 had a damn good hunch he'd have to back
 out of it and he did. But also I'm sure he is
 telling the truth that he was under order.

Now as the matter stands I've been hesitating about
 pushing the story too much to Temple ^{Answer my}
 letter of several days ago. I have a hunch he
 will be much more tolerant, more favorably
 impressed that Cashman was, I anticipate a
 more likely favorite, perhaps acceptance of the
 tale story from Temple. That how the
 matter now stands at this time.

Post script: Just remembered, before closing

3-21-1971 Ed Johnson

This letter is
incomplete

86

When Edna Parker and I called on Josephine Cobb in her office, (nearly) 1/2 hr before we identify that 363B photo) she did not mention the Solenoid iron. That mistake was ^{somewhat} a minor departure from her letter to me. Nor has she mentioned Albro, Ever before to me as being present when they 'saw' the alleged "Embalming instrument". The point here is:

I'm completely - adamantly certain that Allen J. Albro or Geo. Oden 'influenced' (censored) may be a better word) Miss Cobb's letter in which she said they were mistaken about the "Embalming instrument" and suggested discarding my letter instead to the Solenoid iron. When Edna P. and I called on her she was uninhibited, ^{totally} in censored. She spoke freely about the "wooden box" and the "paper" (~~captioning~~ ^{caption}) verifying the un 'it was put to April 1865. I do not recall any mention (Ever before) of the "wooden box" or the "paper caption". The dept of interest people must be (incomplete)

Sheldon

March 26, 1971

Bert Sheldon
Apartment 302
3315 Wisconsin Avenue, N. W.
Washington 16, D. C. 20016

Dear Bett:

I will wait until you hear from Wayne Temple and George Cashman about the S. S. Elder claim that he soldered the lead casket of Abraham Lincoln.

We do have the two colored photos of the soldering irons which you sent us. They are not such that we can use them in the LINCOLN LORE. Won't reproduce will.

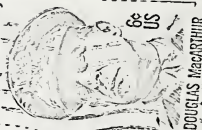
Question! What are the soldering irons doing in Washington when they were used in Springfield on May 4, 1865?

Yours truly

R. Gerald McMurtry

RGM/ nlc

Springfield, Illinois—the Heart of Lincoln Land—
 where are located the only home owned by Lincoln,
 the restored old Illinois State Capitol, and the im-
 pressive Lincoln Monument where the martyred
 President is buried. The cabin shown is in New PM
 Salem, 19 miles from Springfield. *Mar. 1944*



POST CARD

Dear Bert: I did a research *Mar 1944*
 S. S. Elder in great detail. *1944*
 was a tinner and he had a shop
 just off the Square to the NE.
 I believe his story. In fact,
 I sent a lengthy report to the
 Custodian at Ford's Theatre.
 No word from him as yet. I
 wanted to write up my findings
 as an article and use the
 statement by Elder. The coffin
 seems to have had a lead liner.
 So good to see you on Feb.

TO:

Mr. Bert Sheldon, Esq.

3315 Wisconsin Ave.

302

Washington, D. C. 20016

12. Best wishes, *"Doc"*

For information, Write Executive Director
 TOURISM AND COMMERCE COMMISSION
 201 MUNICIPAL BLDG.
 SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62701

Monday

3-25-1971

Dear Doctor Mc Murtry:

On the above date Came a note in
my mail from Wayne Temple
saying that the welding irons
are authentic,

Do You have the snapshot photo
of Linimon holding the shadow box
frame containing the welding
irons? Do You have Cashman's
letter saying that they are "phony"

I shall of course keep you posted
as any and all new developments
take place. In the meantime
I shall write Temple hoping to make
necessary arrangements of about
3 copies of whatever publication
he may have in mind (1 for LMLF
one for Ed Johnson) How well do
you know Temple? From my point
of view you announced your
intention to publish before he died. However,
you may wish to clear with him (the
I don't think you really need to). But,
now they are "OK" historically authentic
Best



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

SPRINGFIELD ILLINOIS 62706

April 5, 1971

Mr. Bert Sheldon
3315 Wisconsin Ave.
302
Washington, D. C. 20016

Dear Bert:

Enclosed is a copy of my final report to Mr. John T. Lissimore.

I do not know whether or not he showed you my first research efforts. Far from being unknown in Springfield, Samuel S. Elder was a well-known man. His tin shop was just at the northeast corner of the Public Square where Lincoln's body lay in state. I note brother Cashman's statements!

Note that the coffin did have a lead lining. Note that the Springfield folks knew that Elder had sealed the casket, too.

Lois and I so enjoyed seeing you in Washington on February 12. We enjoyed seeing the Ford Theatre. It was a perfect day for us. Thanks so much.

When I finish up my research and writing, you shall receive a copy. But you probably get the Lincoln Herald, don't you? Probably will do it for that quarterly.

Sincerely,

Wayne C. Temple
Archivist, State Records Section
Illinois State Archives
Springfield, Illinois 62706



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706
April 5, 1971

Mr. John T. Lissimore
Historian
National Park Service
Ford's Theatre
511 Tenth Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20242

Dear Mr. Lissimore:

Enclosed, the final proof on your Samuel S. Elder material:

1. Abraham Lincoln's coffin in 1865 did have a lead liner which would need to be soldered.

"The coffin is of handsome mahogany, covered with black cloth and lined with lead, with an interior lining of white silk."

Dateline: Washington, Apr. 15, 1865, 11:45 A. M., in the
N. Y. Herald, Sun., Apr. 16, 1865, p. 1, c. 6.

2. When Samuel S. Elder died in Springfield, Illinois, his obituary was headed: "Man Who Sealed the Casket of Lincoln Dies." In the body of the report is this statement: "It was Mr. Elder who sealed the casket of Abraham Lincoln before the body of the martyred president was removed to Oak Ridge Cemetery. ..."

Illinois State Journal (Springfield), Tues., Jan. 13, 1914, p. 7, c. 1.

So, your artifacts are certainly genuine. When you photograph the materials, could I get a copy of the special pass issued to Elder? I will write up this story, sending you copies when I finish.

Cordially,

Wayne C. Temple, Ph. D., F.R.S.A.
Archivist, State Records Section
Illinois State Archives
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Lincolniana

Tinsmith to the Late Mr. Lincoln: Samuel S. Elder

For the Library.

WAYNE C. TEMPLE

Wayne C. Temple

VILLAGE CLOCKS indicated the hour as being after nine but not yet ten on the morning of May 4, 1865. Through the closely packed, milling, and pushing throng of anxious mourners who surrounded the Statehouse on the public square in Springfield, Illinois, marched four Union soldiers with fixed bayonets gleaming brightly in the eastern sunlight. They had been detailed to give protective escort to a local tinsmith as he attempted to traverse the short distance from his shop to the Capitol, which was festooned with yards of black and white crepe.¹

As he shuffled along, the tinsmith clutched a red-hot charcoal firepot in one hand and a bottle of muriatic (hydrochloric) acid in the other. He also carried an Illinois state officers' pass—a vital document because special orders of the day

decreed that "none except such as have cards of admission from the Committee of Arrangements will be permitted to enter the State House or the grounds, at other [times] than those indicated." The cards were issued exclusively to state officers and "those having duties in the State House or grounds."² In the tinsmith's pockets were bar solder, a sturdy pocketknife, and two large soldering irons.

At times the soldiers resorted to their rifle butts and bayonets to force open a narrow avenue through the dense crowd of mourners who were attempting to enter the Statehouse before the cut-off time of 10 A.M. At one point, the crowd jostled the artisan, causing the acid to slosh out of the unstopped bottle and onto the pass. He gripped the bottle tightly, recovered his balance, wiped off the ticket, and pro-

Wayne C. Temple first heard of the Elder Collection in 1971, when he was in Washington to make the Lincoln Day addresses at the Lincoln Memorial and the United States Senate. He is deputy director of the Illinois State Archives and the commanding lieutenant general of the Illinois State Militia. He is the author of numerous books and articles, and for fifteen and one-half years was editor of the Lincoln Herald.

¹E. B. Hawley & Co. charged the state of Illinois \$221.30 for the mourning drapery. The same firm also sold \$46.30 worth of mourning goods to the Adjutant General's office. Auditor's Receipt Book, 1862-1865, pp. 592A, 602A, Illinois State Archives, Springfield.

²*Illinois State Journal* (Springfield), April 26, 1865, p. 2, col. 3. John Todd Stuart was chairman of the committee.

that proper monetary controls could prevent depression, and he continued to promote the southern rimland. In an address in 1950 to the Association of Cotton Textile Merchants, he noted that the migration of industry to the Southwest and Pacific Coast was inevitable. Manufacturing, he said, must continue to move toward centers of raw materials, distribution, and food supply.⁵⁶

Always interested in the hemisphere, he expanded the Sears Latin American operations. In 1942 a Sears retail store opened in Havana, followed in 1947 by one in Mexico City. Stores were added in Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and Brazil by 1956. Wood made every effort to encourage local control of such concerns and, to a surprising degree, he succeeded. Of 5,723 people employed in the Sears international ventures in 1954, only seventy-nine came from the United States. A check of Mexican operations in 1952 reveals that a total of fourteen—out of some two thousand employees—came from North America. Latin American manufac-

turers supplied eighty percent of all the goods, and profits were reinvested in local stores.⁵⁷ In addition, Wood in 1952 announced plans for a Canadian branch, joining Sears to Simpsons, Ltd., the second largest retailer in Canada.⁵⁸

Wood died in 1969 at the age of ninety. He had helped revolutionize the field of merchandising, aided in leading a futile crusade against intervention in the world's most sweeping conflict, and fostered welfare capitalism and business cooperation with federal agencies. Although nostalgic for an America of small towns and rural values, he maintained that positive government action—particularly in the realm of currency manipulation—could alleviate depression. In the late 1930's he feared that military commitments overseas and massive federal powers at home would destroy the nation. Yet even when the country's leadership moved increasingly farther from his goal, Wood sought national renewal through hemispheric expansion and regional development.

Time has invalidated many of Wood's beliefs: that such innovations as profit-sharing could curb a nationwide growth of trade unions, that the New Deal was actually anti-business, that monetary policy could end depressions, and that Roosevelt's foreign policy was one of conspiracy and treason. Despite Wood's affiliation with right-wing groups that are now often viewed skeptically, he never lost the affection of many whose policies he opposed. Even the newspapers, while reporting his controversial activities, always treated him with deference. Wood's vision of a pure, unentangled United States appears farther away than ever. The nation would have as much difficulty returning to pure isolationism as to a society centering on independent landowners, a laissez-faire economy, and limited government. Yet many Americans long shared his dream, and we would be arrogant indeed to find it an ignoble one.

⁵⁶Wood to Sterling Morton, June 6, 1952, Papers of Sterling Morton, Chicago Historical Society. Wood to Max McGraw, April 20, 1944, Wood Papers.

⁵⁷*New York Times*, Feb. 14, 1955, p. 35, cols. 3-5.

⁵⁸"The General's General Store," p. 84; *New York Times*, Feb. 3, 1950, p. 35, col. 1. When Wood assumed control of the company, Sears operated twenty-seven retail stores, sold about \$270,000,000 worth of goods a year, and earned \$25,000,000. In 1954—the year of his retirement as chairman—Sears controlled more than seven hundred retail stores, with a sales volume around \$3,000,000,000. Annual earnings were \$110,000,000. Pflaum, p. 70.

⁵⁹Accounts of Sears in Latin America can be found in "The General's General Store," p. 94; *New York Times*, March 8, 1954, p. 36, col. 6; "Selling More for Less in Latin America," *Business Week*, June 4, 1949, pp. 105-06; and Pflaum, p. 72.

⁶⁰"Northward Ho!" *Time*, Nov. 24, 1952, pp. 101-02.

ceeded to the north doors of the State-house. Carefully, he climbed the stairs to the second floor and stepped into the hall used by the House of Representatives. There, resting on an elaborate catafalque, was the coffin of the martyred Abraham Lincoln. Constructed of walnut, it was lined with lead and covered in heavy black cloth. Newspaper accounts incorrectly identified the coffin as being fashioned of mahogany.³

Proof still exists concerning its manufacture. On April 19, 1865, the Washington, D.C., undertaking firm of Sands and Harvey billed the federal government for a "Coffin covered with fine Broad Cloth, lined with fine White Satin & Silk trimmed with best mounting, Solid Silver plate[,] bullion fringe tassels &c, heavy lead lining & Walnut outside Case for the late President, Abraham Lincoln \$1,500."⁴

A fuller description appeared in the Springfield *Illinois State Journal* (the *Journal* article was among those that mistakenly described the coffin as mahogany):

The coffin is of the most magnificent description. Its cost was between one thousand and two thousand dollars, and it is probably the handsomest ever constructed in this country. It is of mahogany, lined with lead, and covered with black cloth, of the richest and most expensive quality, heavily fringed with silver, with four silver medallions on each side in which are set the handles.

The outside of the coffin is festooned with massive silver tacks, representing drapery, in each fold of which there is a silver star, and the outer edges are adorned with silver braid, with five tassels, five inches in length, each side having upon it four massive handles, and at the head and foot there are stars. Upon the top



Above, a copy of the only known photograph of Lincoln in his coffin. The picture was taken by Jeremiah Gurney at the City Hall of New York, April 24, 1865.

there is a row of silver tacks, extending the entire length of both sides, about two inches from the edge. Upon the center is a silver plate, encircled by a shield, formed also of silver tacks, and the face lid and top are united with five silver stars. The inside of the face lid is raised with white satin, the corner piece being trimmed with black and white silk braid, festooned at each corner with four silver stars.

The remainder of the inside of the coffin is lined with box-plaited satin, the pillow and lower surface being of fine white silk, and the whole being encircled with chenille as in fringe. The upper third of the coffin is lined with rich white satin.⁵

It was to solder the lead lining that the craftsman had been summoned. As soon

³See, for example, the news bulletin from Washington, D.C., under date of 11:45 A.M., April 15, 1865, cited in the *New York Herald*, April 16, 1865, p. 1, col. 6. Several years later, the body was still encased in lead but rested in a cedar coffin. *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 8, 1876, p. 5, col. 1.

⁴Commissioner of Public Buildings, Funeral Accounts, Abraham Lincoln, pp. 84-85, Record Group 48, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵May 4, 1865, p. 2, cols. 3-4.



Samuel Elder, standing at right, with his brother David; seated are his brothers James and Jonathan. Photograph by A. S. Creech of Sullivan, Illinois.

as the last mourner had left the chamber, he commenced his work. When the task was completed, the coffin was slowly lifted, borne carefully down the steep steps, and placed into an elegant horse-drawn hearse, provided by the mayor of St. Louis. At 11:30 the long funeral procession moved out towards the temporary receiving vault at Oak Ridge Cemetery.⁶

On that sorrowful day, most people assumed that Lincoln's noble face would never again be seen by mortal man. The tinsmith, the last person to view Lincoln's face on May 4, 1865, was so moved by the experience that he put aside the tools with which he had closed the coffin. His story, as well as his name, would probably be forgotten except that his tools eventually

were given to the Lincoln Memorial Museum at Ford's Theatre. The name of the tinsmith is Samuel S. Elder.

Elder first saw the light of day in Bourbon County, Kentucky, on May 5, 1831. He was one of twenty children born to Samuel and Phoebe (Clinkenbeard) Elder, who had previously lived in Sevier County, Tennessee, and Scott County, Indiana.⁷ In 1834, the family settled in Sangamon County, Illinois, about seven miles southeast of Springfield in Section 2, Township 15 North, Range 4 West of the Third Principal Meridian (Rochester Township). Eventually, Samuel Elder, Sr., acquired the south half of the northeast quarter, the east half of the southwest quarter, and the south half of the northwest quarter of Section 2—a total of 240 acres—which contained primarily rich prairie bottoms with some hardwood timber.⁸

The father (born June 22, 1787) died in 1846, before reaching the age of sixty, leaving a substantial estate to his wife.⁹ For a time Phoebe Elder made her home with her son Jonathan, a farmer, and eventually took up residence in Springfield with one of her married daughters, Mrs. Levi F. Dyson.¹⁰

Samuel Elder, Jr., left the farm at the age of seventeen and arrived in Springfield on February 17, 1849. The very next

⁶*Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1865, p. 1, col. 2.

⁷John Carroll Power, *History of the Early Settlers of Sangamon County, Illinois* (Springfield: Edwin A. Wilson & Co., 1876), p. 282.

⁸Inventory of the estate of Samuel Elder, signed by James Elder, Jan. 20, 1847, Sangamon County Probate Record 714, Sangamon County Building, Springfield; Illinois Federal Land Surveys, Field Notes, Vol. 111, p. 201, Illinois State Archives.

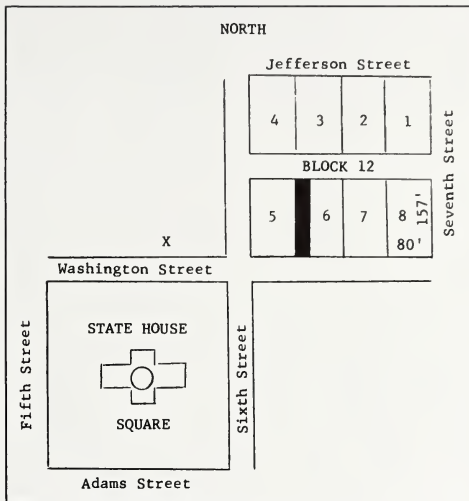
⁹He died intestate. Sangamon County Probate Record 714 and Book L, p. 275; the author thanks Earl Maulding for making those records available. For later transactions concerning the Elder farm, see *Clinkenbeard v. Phoebe Elder* (1857), Sangamon County Circuit Court Records, Illinois State Archives.

¹⁰Phoebe Elder died on Dec. 27, 1881, and was buried beside her husband in Rochester Cemetery. *History of Sangamon County, Illinois* (Chicago: Inter-State Pub. Co., 1881), 1, 660; *Daily Illinois State Journal*, Dec. 28, 1881, p. 6, cols. 2-3.

day he began an apprenticeship in the tinner's trade.¹¹ He boarded in a small hotel operated by Samuel Chamblin.¹²

Elder's instructor was almost certainly his brother-in-law, Jotham S. Rogers (1816-1857), a native of Bangor, Maine, who had settled in Springfield in 1837 and married Sarah Elder in 1848.¹³ Rogers operated a rather large tin, copper, and sheet-iron manufactory that employed seven men. Industrial census records for 1850 show that he had invested \$2,500 in the business and produced annually \$2,000 worth of tinware, \$875 worth of stove trimmings, and \$400 worth of sheet-iron stoves (50 in number). Other manufactured items brought in an additional \$500 per year, giving Rogers a gross income of \$3,775. His yearly expenses included \$1,560 for 120 boxes of tin; \$120 for 400 pounds of copper; \$560 for 70 bundles of sheet iron; \$27 for 300 bushels of charcoal; and \$17 for 180 bushels of stove coal. Hired help cost about \$70 per month. Thus, before local taxes, Rogers cleared about \$651 each year, a most suitable profit in those times.¹⁴

Some time during the course of Samuel Elder's first few months in Springfield, he met a sixteen-year-old orphan by the name of Sarah Ann Shives. Born in Pennsylvania on July 4, 1833, she had been



Author's sketch of the north side of the Statehouse square. The X to the north of Washington Street marks the approximate location of Samuel Elder's tin shop in May, 1865. In July of that year Elder moved to the location between Lots 5 and 6 marked in black.

transplanted to Springfield in 1843 and entered the household of a merchant, Grover Ayres, and his wife Jane. Sarah Ann apparently cared for the Ayres children and helped with the housework and cooking.¹⁵ On December 18, 1851, she and Elder were married by Rev. Thomas C. Teasdale, a Baptist clergyman.¹⁶

Little is known about their private life except that religion was important to them. Samuel had been baptised before the marriage in 1851, and Sarah received the ordinance in 1856. Fellow members of the First (later Central) Baptist Church elected Elder a trustee in 1879.¹⁷ He was also an active member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, rising to the rank of Noble Grand (Master) of Lodge 465.¹⁸

During his tinsmith apprenticeship, Elder had saved his earnings and after his

¹¹*History of Sangamon County* (1881), p. 660.

¹²United States Census of 1850, Springfield, Sangamon County, p. 103A, l. 33.

¹³Power, pp. 626-27; Sangamon County Marriage License Book, Vol. 2, p. 289, County Building.

¹⁴U.S. Census of 1850, Products of Industry, Springfield, p. 609.

¹⁵*Illinois State Journal*, Feb. 4, 1909, p. 6, col. 3. She is incorrectly identified as Mrs. F. S. Elder. See also U.S. Census of 1850, Springfield, pp. 79A and B.

¹⁶U.S. Census of 1850, Springfield, p. 79A, l. 24; Sangamon County Marriage License Book, Vol. 3, p. 40.

¹⁷Membership Records, MSS, Central Baptist Church; the Elders' numbers in the membership roll are 178 and 179. *History of Sangamon County* (1881), p. 608.

¹⁸Membership Records, MSS, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Grand Lodge of Illinois, Springfield.

marriage began seeking a favorable business opportunity. He attained a portion of his life's goals when a new stove company opened on the north side of the public square in July, 1853. Called Nigh, Perce & Company, the firm was owned by James M. Nigh, William M. Perce, and a silent partner—Samuel S. Elder. He was the "& Company."¹⁹

The enterprise lasted for only four months, for on the evening of November 30, a fire nearly destroyed the shop. The horrified owners discovered that they had suffered a loss of \$4,000; they held only \$2,000 worth of insurance.²⁰ The firm was dissolved on December 7, and a new one created under the name Perce & Elder. That lasted until spring of the following year; on April 28, 1854, it, too, ended.²¹ From then on, Elder operated independently. His first shop was across from the Statehouse, on the north side of Washington Street between Fifth and Sixth.²² Soon, one of his brothers (perhaps Isaac) joined him, and the name of the shop was changed to Elder & Bro. In their advertisement they described themselves as "stove merchants."²³ Perhaps because of their proximity to the Statehouse, they had enormous success with state contracts. In the Supreme Court Chamber of the Statehouse they installed stoves, stove pipe, and stove zinc (the metal-covered square used as a platform to separate the hot stove from the wooden floors). Sometimes they also stored the stoves used in that awe-inspiring room (stoves in those days were disassembled during the summer months). The brothers did similar work in the offices of the governor and state treasurer. One of their largest jobs was furnishing the stoves for the Senate Chamber. The task took months, and on February 25, 1861, they were paid \$458.25. Likewise, they furnished the new stoves for the House of Representatives. Other contracts included repair of iron work in the Statehouse and construction of tin boxes for

specie in the treasurer's quarters.²⁴

According to the federal census of 1860, the "stove & tin manufactory" of the Elders annually bought two hundred boxes of tin valued at \$2,600; two hundred bundles of sheet iron, \$1,200; and fifty sheets of copper, \$150. All of their articles were turned out by hand. Five men soldered and pounded in the shop; the total payroll was \$200 per month. The annual output of the firm amounted to 450 items. Tinning earned \$1,500; stoves, \$900; and miscellaneous work, \$4,000—making an income of \$6,400.²⁵ The firm was solvent and growing.

Samuel S. Elder was well known among Statehouse officials, and it was therefore quite natural that those persons in charge of President Lincoln's funeral would seek his professional assistance "shortly after nine o'clock on the morning of May 4," 1865. Harrison C. Fitzhugh and Colonel John Lane Hancock were the two authorities who summoned Elder on that day. Both gentlemen had accompanied the body from Chicago to Springfield.²⁶

Hancock, second vice-president of the

¹⁹ *Illinois Daily Journal*, July 23, 1853, p. 3, col. 2. The *Journal* incorrectly identifies the partners as Nye and Pierce.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Dec. 2, 1853, p. 2, col. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Dec. 10, 1853, p. 3, col. 2, and April 28, 1854, p. 3, col. 2.

²² *History of Sangamon County* (1881), p. 660; Harry E. Pratt, *Springfield's Public Square in Lincoln's Day—1861 and 1941* (Springfield: Williamson Prtg., 1941), p. 2; M. G. Wadsworth to Sangamon County Old Settlers Reunion, Aug. 28, 1912, in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 5 (1912), 413-14.

²³ *Buck & Krieger's City Directory, for the Year 1859, Springfield, Illinois* (Springfield: B. A. Richard & Co.'s Job Office, 1859), p. 40.

²⁴ Auditor's Receipt Book, 1856-1859, pp. 47B, 211B, 299A, 299B; *ibid.*, 1859-1861, pp. 4A, 17B, 19A, 100B, 111A, 113B, 122A, 199A, 218A.

²⁵ U.S. Census of 1860, Products of Industry, Springfield, p. 1, l. 18.

²⁶ William T. Coggeshall, *The Journeys of Abraham Lincoln . . .* (Columbus: Ohio State Journal, 1865), pp. 271, 282, 285.

²⁷ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*

Chicago Board of Trade and commander of the First Regiment of the Illinois State Militia, had been assistant marshal of the memorial services in Chicago.²⁷ Fitzhugh, a carpenter, was a resident of Springfield and prominent in Republican politics. He joined Hancock in Chicago as a representative of the Springfield obsequies committee.²⁸

Precisely at 10 A.M., the last mourners were turned away and tinsmith Elder commenced his work. Until 11:30, according to a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, Elder "was occupied in enclosing the remains and making all preparations necessary for its interment."²⁹ For that soldering, which Elder described as sacred, he never tendered a bill to the state of Illinois. The receipt book of the state auditor shows no record of his service.

On July 18, 1865, the Elder brothers purchased a new and larger site for their operation. For \$4,500, they purchased from Philip C. and Lucy G. Latham the west twenty feet of Lot 6 in Block 12 of the Old Town Plat of Springfield. Before division, the entire lot had measured 80 feet



The Illinois Statehouse draped in mourning for Abraham Lincoln

(1880-1901; rpt. Gettysburg, Pa.: National Historical Society, 1972), Ser. 1, Vol. 45, Pt. 1, p. 1079; Chicago Militia Records, Adjutant General's File.

²⁸Roy P. Basler, ed., Marion Dolores Pratt and Lloyd A. Dunlap, asst. eds., *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955), III, 372; U.S. Census of 1860, Springfield, p. 153, ll. 8 ff. For Fitzhugh's later service, see Auditor's Receipt Book, 1865-1867, p. 24B, and Treasurer's Report, March 29, 1866, National Lincoln Monument Association Papers, Illinois State Historical Library.

²⁹*Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1865, p. 1, col. 2.

³⁰Sangamon County Deed Record, Book 23, p. 273, and Plat Record, Recorder's Office, both in County Building.

³¹*Springfield City Directory and Business Mirror for 1866* (Springfield: Bronson & Nixon, 1865), pp. 115, 194; *Sangamon County Gazetteer* . . . (Springfield: J. C. W. Bailey, 1866), p. 97.

³²Sangamon County Deed Record, Book 18, p. 4; Book 21, p. 84; Book 29, p. 440; Book 31, pp. 297-98.

³³Auditor's Receipt Book, 1865-1867, p. 5A.

wide by 157 feet deep.³⁰ The land was located on the north side of Washington Street between Sixth and Seventh streets, just east of the original shop. The new address was 616 East Washington.

The new owners christened their acquisition the Elders Building and announced that Isaac, Samuel, and Jonathan had joined together as tanners dealing in wholesale as well as retail merchandise; they advertised stoves and tin, sheet iron, copper, and wooden ware.³¹

Samuel continued to invest in real estate.³² He also managed to gain additional state contracts. Around the time of Lincoln's funeral, Elder & Bros. repaired the dome of the Capitol. In the process they laid 115 squares (plus 100 feet) of tin roofing. For that job the firm received \$1,772.70 on August 15, 1865.³³ Their employees fabricated tin letter boxes for

the secretary of state's office and furnished flue stoppers for the governor's office.³⁴ Business continued to prosper for them, and Samuel even "made several important inventions" in connection with his trade.³⁵ His specialties were stoves, grates, and mantles, the latter being the pinnacle of his expertise. He and his men also performed extensive amounts of roofing and general metal work.³⁶

By 1880, Samuel Elder's "copper, sheet iron and tinware" plant employed four hands, two of whom were below the age of sixteen. Collectively they earned \$1,200 a year. Elder had \$1,000 in capital invested in his business, spent \$5,000 for raw materials, and produced \$8,000 worth of hardware.³⁷

After May 4, 1865, Elder never again used the soldering coppers he had used to seal Lincoln's casket. Rather, he cherished them and guarded them (along with the other items he had used) as precious mementos of what he called the saddest moment in American history. But somehow a noted Springfield collector of Lincolniana, Harry Barker, learned of the tools. He finally acquired them from the aging Elder and asked the tinsmith for a signed statement of authenticity. Elder complied on February 6, 1899. Today the certificate and tools repose at Ford's Theatre in our nation's capital. Just how they got there is not certain, but after exhaustive research begun at the suggestion of Bert Sheldon and the National Park Service, the author has no doubt that they are genuine. The letter printed below is addressed to H. E. Barker, who in 1899 operated a store in the center of Springfield at 419 East Adams. He dealt mainly in picture frames, artists' materials, and second-hand books but was also nationally known as a collector of Lincolniana.³⁸ So many valuable Lincoln items passed in and out of Barker's Art Store that its proprietor was referred to as the "Lincoln Broker."³⁹

Barker remained in Springfield until

1925, when, at the age of sixty-three, he and his wife Eleanor moved to Los Angeles. There he established a new bookstore at 1922 South Hobart Boulevard. He was a founding member of the Lincoln Fellowship of Southern California and served as curator of its growing collection. From time to time he also published limited editions of Lincolniana. In 1932, for example, he privately printed *Abraham Lincoln: An Address by Hon. Newton Bateman, LL.D.* Limited to one hundred copies and bearing the imprint of the Spanish American Institute, it is indeed a scarce work now. In 1940 he wrote *Abraham Lincoln: His Life in Illinois, Being Year by Year Incidents from 1830 to 1865*, which came off the press of M. Barrows & Company of New York. Barker died at the age of eighty on March 13, 1943.⁴⁰

Sarah Shives Elder succumbed in Springfield at the family home, 906 South Eighth, at 4 A.M. on February 3, 1909, the centennial year of Lincoln's birth.⁴¹ Her husband lived on alone until January 12,

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8B.

³⁵ *Illinois State Journal*, Jan. 13, 1914, p. 7, col. 1.

³⁶ *History of Sangamon County* (1881), p. 660. At the time he soldered Lincoln's coffin, Elder lived on Madison Street between Seventh and Eighth; he later lived at 130 East Monroe and 903 South Eighth. *Springfield City Directory . . . 1866*, p. 115; *Babcock's City Directory of Springfield, Illinois, for 1872-3* (Springfield: John H. Johnson, Printer, 1872), p. 45; *Springfield City Directory, 1898* (Springfield: R. L. Polk & Co., 1898), I, 182.

³⁷ U.S. Census of 1880, Products of Industry, Springfield, p. 2, I, 15.

³⁸ *Springfield City Directory, 1898*, I, 62; *Springfield City Directory, 1900-1901* (Springfield: R. L. Polk & Co., 1900), II, 63.

³⁹ A. S. Chapman, "Curiosities of the Lincoln Cult," *Scrap Book*, Feb., 1907, pp. 927-29.

⁴⁰ See Ralph G. Lindstrom, "A Californian's Collection of Lincolniana," *Lincoln Herald*, Dec., 1943, p. 14; "News and Comments," *Lincoln Quarterly*, 2 (1943), 297; Barker Death Certificate, Department of Public Health, Sacramento, Calif.

⁴¹ *Illinois State Journal*, Feb. 4, 1909, p. 6, col. 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Jan. 13, 1914, p. 7, col. 1.



Above, the knife, solder, and soldering irons used by Samuel Elder to seal the coffin of Abraham Lincoln on May 4, 1865. At upper left is the pass carried by Elder on that day. The collection was acquired in 1899 by Harry Barker of Springfield.

1914. On that date, while living at 410 South Fifth, he died as a result of heart trouble. His obituary for a local newspaper was captioned, "Man Who Sealed the Casket of Lincoln Dies." The writer repeated the vital information that "it was Mr. Elder

who sealed the casket of Abraham Lincoln before the body of the martyred president was removed to Oak Ridge cemetery."⁴² Apparently there were still people who remembered the soldering that Elder had performed in 1865.

The graves of both Sarah and Samuel Elder are in Oak Ridge Cemetery, within sight of the impressive Lincoln Tomb, but no stone marks the plot. Even the clerk who recorded Sarah Elder's burial almost thwarted any claim to immortality to incorrectly identifying her as "Mrs. F. S. Elder."⁴³ This report will have to substitute for the granite tombstones the Elders

never received.

Printed below is the hitherto unpublished account of the events connected with the soldering of Abraham Lincoln's coffin on May 4, 1865, as related by Samuel S. Elder in 1899. No changes have been made in the spelling, capitalization, or punctuation of the original document, except where indicated by brackets.

SPRINGFIELD ILLS Feb 6 1899

MR H. E. BARKER

DR SIR

In Reply to your request for an Account of my Experience In Sealing The Casket Containing the body of Abraham Lincoln I make the following Statement

At nine o clock on the Morning of May 3d 1865 the funeral cortage of Abraham Lincoln after a twelve days journey from Washington City Arrived in Springfield Ills. A Vast Crowd had Gathered in the City to receive and View the Remains of our beloved fellow Citizen, a Crowd So Vast and So Eager that only the Presance of Armed Soldiers Prevented them from Crushing one another In there Efforts to Catch a glimps of Lincolns Face [F]rom the time the Coffin was opened at 10 o Clock on the Morning of May the 3d throughout the day and Even through the Long hours of Night this Great Crowd Slowly Prest Its way into the State House Through the North Entrance up one flight of Stares through the Hall And down another stare way Passing out through the South door

Shortly after nine o clock on the Morning of May 4 I was Summond By Mr H G Fitzhue and Col J L Hancock to Repair at once with the necessary tools[—]I was then Engaged with my Brother In the Stove and tin Business[—]to the State House there to Seal up air tight with Solder the Lead Lind Casket Containing Lincolns Body [T]hey Started to Leave the store As I Collected my tools and I hastily Cald them back disclosing that It would be Imposable to Pass Through the Crowd with out a guard Col Hancock Said he would Provide A guard and Soon four Soldiers With bayonets fixed appeared to Ascort me [T]hey were obliged to use There Bayonets More than once in Forcing our way through I caried In one Hand my Charcoal Fire Pot and In the other a Small Bottel of muric acid and a State Officers Pass to admit me through The Line of Guards stationed at The Gate [A]s we Passed through the Iron Gate Into the State house Ground The Crowd Surged up against me So that acid from the Bottel Splased on the blue Card board Pass nearly obliterating the words Printed on it. We Passed on into the building And Into Representative Hall Where the body Lay in State Quickly Proceeding with the work I was soon abel to announce the Completion to the officers in Charge, Hiding for Ever his face from us With the aid of the four Sold[i]er guards I Returned to My Place of business taking With me the tools that had bin been [sic] used in Sacred [work,] a work So Sacred to Me That I have never used them Since but Carefully guarded them and Cherished them As a Precious Memento of the Sadest Moments in Americans History[,] the The [sic] Moment when So far as this world is Concerned the face of Abraham Lincoln was Coverd to be Sean No More on Earth.⁴⁴

Respfuly
S S ELDER

⁴³Burial Records, Oak Ridge Cemetery.

⁴⁴Unknown to Elder, later officials in charge of Lincoln's body frequently had a plumber cut a hole in the lead lining to ascertain that the body was still there. That policy began on Dec. 21, 1865, when the

body was first transferred to another resting place. Leon P. Hopkins made several of the openings and closings. Lloyd Lewis, *Myths After Lincoln* (1929; rpt. New York: Press of the Readers Club, 1941), pp. 265, 286-89.

Casket commemorates Lincoln's death

by Doug Pokorski

A first glimpse of a reproduction of Abraham Lincoln's original casket, which will go on display this week, is likely to startle some observers. Eyelid the casket's black broadcloth covering studded with silver stars and set in and accented with white silk and satin and a chenille

The hand-crafted copy is the result of a year and a half of research and more than 435 man-hours of labor, and is based on rare photographs of the original casket.

Fringe, one viewer said, "To me it looks country-western, like something Elvis Presley would have — all that fringe."

The casket will go on display at Lincoln's Tomb beginning Monday to commemorate the 120th anniversary of Lincoln's death.

The hand-crafted copy is the result of a year and a half of research and more than 435 man-hours of labor, and is based on rare photographs of the original casket.

"There were some pen and ink drawings from the time, but those caskets were different from the one in the photo," said Charlie Winburn, spokesman for the company that built the copy. "We tried to replicate the one in the photograph as closely as possible."

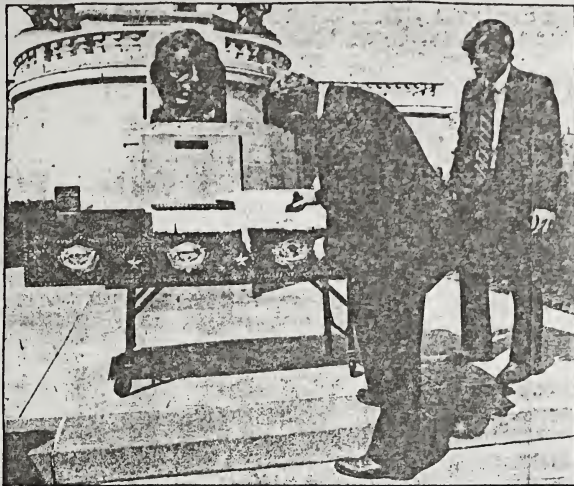
The reproduction was commissioned by the Illinois Funeral Directors Association and built by the Batesville Casket Company of Batesville, Ind. Most of the research on the project was done by Springfield funeral director Virgil Davis and by Batesville employees.

Like its predecessor, the reproduction casket is in the old-fashioned "top-plancher" design — narrow at the head, broader at the shoulders and narrowing again toward the feet.

Although the original was made of three layers of walnut, cedar and lead, the reproduction is built of a single layer of poplar, to make it easier to move.

"An Amish coffin-maker named Levi DeWeiler built the basic box," Winburn said. "It's still the same basic box they use in Amish communities today. Levi also put on the broadcloth covering."

The casket has eight silver handles. Silver cords and tassels accent



State Journal-Register / Chris Covatta

Ron McCormick, left, and Geof McCormick arrange the fringe on the replica of Lincoln's casket. The casket will go on display at Lincoln's Tomb beginning Monday to commemorate the 120th anniversary of Lincoln's death.

the outside, along with silver tacks arranged in a shamrock-like pattern enclosing eight silver stars.

Some historians have claimed that the shamrock pattern was the inspiration of an Irish artist who had been told to design something "beautiful and meaningful" for the casket.

The inside of the reproduction is white satin, with a silver star in each corner. The pillow and lower surface are white silk, and it is circled with chenille fringe.

Lincoln's Tomb Site Superintendent Carol Andrews says the casket was "a little unusual," even for Lincoln's era.

"Most of the caskets were not as ornate, with the tacks and the stars and festoons. That was more elaborate," Andrews said. "I don't know the reason for covering the casket with cloth, either. Walnut was a very fine wood, and I don't know why it was covered, except, perhaps, for mourning."

Andrews said caskets in Lincoln's day were custom-made to fit the deceased. There were no standard sizes, so Lincoln's height would not have been a problem.

The reproduction on display is a copy of one of several caskets that have held Lincoln's body over the years, Andrews said.

"This is the first casket. If you don't count the one they used to take him to the White House from the boarding house where he died," she said.

The original of the casket on display at the tomb was the one in which Lincoln's body was put on view at the White House and later at the U.S. Capitol. It was also used to transport the body back to Springfield.

After ceremonies here, the casket was placed in the receiving vault at Oak Ridge Cemetery and later transferred to a temporary vault while a proper tomb was built.

In 1871, as preparations were being made to move the body into the

tomb, the remains were removed from the original casket and placed in an iron one, because authorities feared the embalming had failed.

As it turned out, the original embalming had been successful, and the move probably was unnecessary.

"There was never any mention of what happened to the original casket," Andrews said. "We assumed perhaps it was buried, but that's just an assumption."

She said Lincoln's body was transferred again in 1874 — this time to a lead-lined cedar coffin — because the iron one was too large to fit in the marble sarcophagus made for the tomb.

The second "official" casket also disappeared, Andrews said.

The reproduction casket will be on display at the tomb Monday through May 4, commemorating the dates of Lincoln's death and interment in 1865.

